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Northern Alberta
Development Council

Challenge NORTH

PLANNING FOR PROGRESS

MARCH 29 - 31, 2000
GRANDE PRAIRIE, ALBERTA

Conference Proceedings

Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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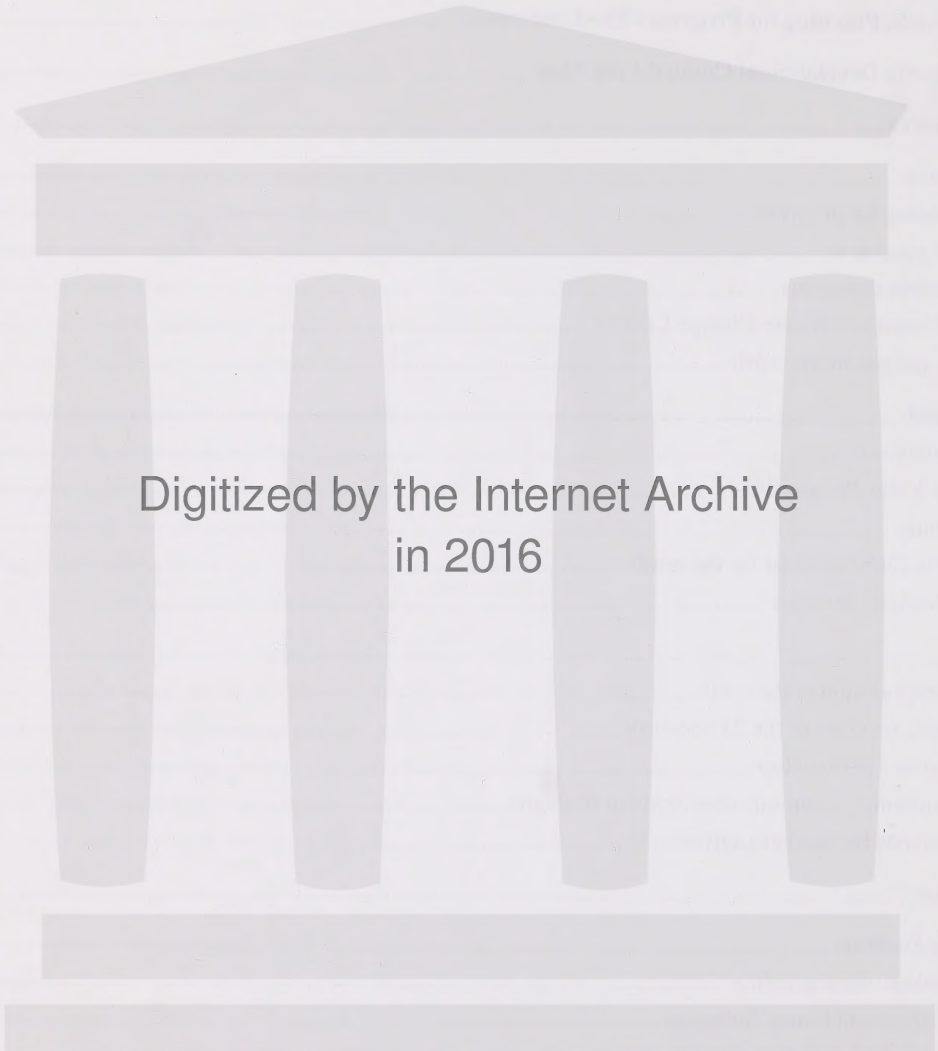

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Message from the Honourable Mike Cardinal
Minister of Resource Development

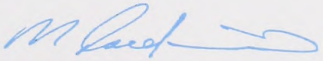
I am pleased to extend greetings to the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) on behalf of Alberta Resource Development.

As the then-Chair of the NADC, I had the opportunity to attend ***Challenge North: Planning for Progress*** this past March. In my opening remarks, I noted, *"The purpose of Challenge North is to discuss development opportunities and challenges that face the region within the next five to 10 years."* Obstacles like skill development and access to financing options continue to delay the development of northern Alberta. By recognizing a changing economic climate, by being accountable for northern development and by embracing the recommendations made at this conference, Alberta's northern communities will continue to grow.

This conference was an ideal platform to discuss barriers and solutions surrounding the development of northern Alberta and I am eager to see some of the recommendations made here implemented in the near future.

As a result of the recent changes in the Alberta Government, I have been appointed Minister of Resource Development. The NADC is an important part of Alberta Resource Development, and while I am no longer directly involved with the NADC as Chair, as the minister responsible for northern development, I still maintain an interest in Alberta's north. I am confident the new Chair, Mr. Guy Boutilier, the MLA for Fort McMurray, will keep building on the progress the NADC has made.

Sincerely,



Mike Cardinal
Minister
MLA for Athabasca/Wabasca Constituency

History of the Northern Alberta Development Council

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) was established in 1963 as an advisory group to government. Today, the NADC has 10 members with diverse backgrounds from across the region. The NADC is responsible for investigating, monitoring, evaluating, planning and promoting practical measures to foster and advance development in northern Alberta. It advises government in matters of social and economic development, the development of communities and the development of government services and programs to meet the needs of northern Alberta residents.

The NADC believes input from northern Albertans is vital to help guide the region's future development. The NADC gathers public input and advice by:

- holding three leaders' roundtables annually and watching presentations which highlight northern concerns;
- presenting conferences and workshops to stimulate northern discussion and strategies;
- initiating practical research projects on regional and community-based issues;
- facilitating interdepartmental coordination on matters affecting the north's growth.

Challenge North: Planning for Progress
The Conference

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) hosted a major conference, ***Challenge North: Planning for Progress,*** in Grande Prairie, Alberta, March 29 to 31, 2000.

The conference provided business and community leaders from across the region the opportunity to discuss challenges and opportunities they believe are critical to the future growth of northern Alberta.

Through presentations and workshops, the conference enlightened delegates about the economic, social, environmental and global trends that may have significant impact on northern development. Delegates exchanged ideas and suggested strategies suited to the north's unique circumstances and needs.

Northern Alberta will benefit from the many recommendations made at the conference sessions. The NADC is in the process of prioritizing key issues which will be included in its three-year business plan.

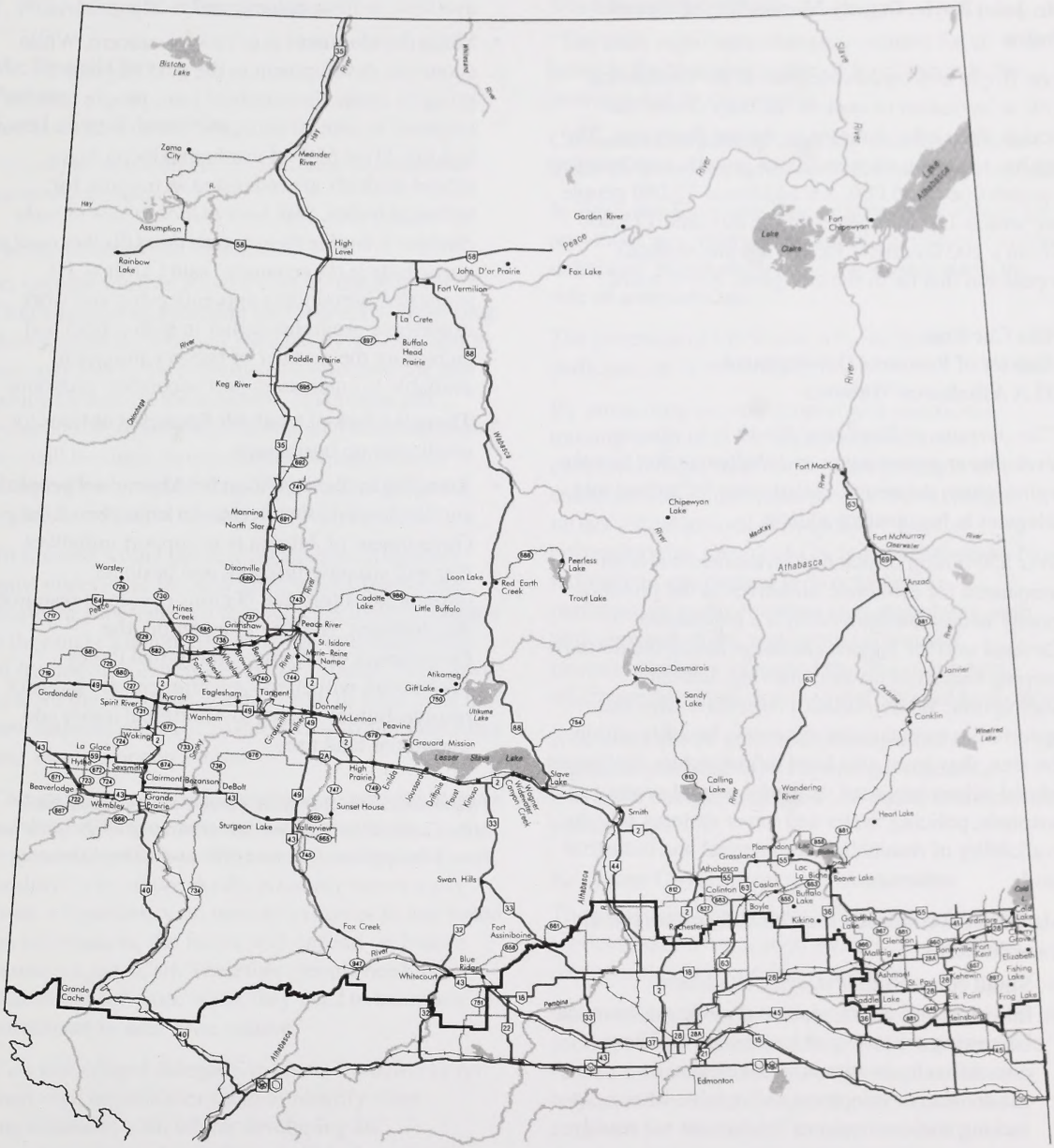
The NADC is pleased to present this summary of the conference proceedings as part of its ongoing effort to maintain communications with its stakeholders and enhance the future development of Alberta's north.

NADC members for 1999-2000

Honourable Mike Cardinal, MLA Chair
Mr. Art Avery, Fort McMurray
Mr. Alvin Billings, High Prairie
Mr. Don Erno, Sexsmith
Mr. Ernie Isley, Cold Lake
Mr. Gerald McIvor, Whitecourt
Mr. Floyd Thompson, Lac La Biche
Mr. Al Toews, Fort Vermilion

NADC members for 2000-2001

Mr. Guy Boutilier, MLA Fort McMurray, Chair
Mr. Art Avery, Fort McMurray
Ms. Sandra Cardinal, Lac La Biche
Ms. Doris Courtoreille, Kinuso
Mr. Berkley Ferguson, Athabasca
Mr. Ernie Isley, Cold Lake
Mr. Gerald McIvor, Whitecourt
Mr. Pete Merlo, Grande Prairie
Mr. Michael Procter, Peace River
Mr. Al Toews, Fort Vermillion



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA

Km 10 0 20 40 60 80 Km
Miles 10 0 10 20 30 40 50 Miles

PRIMARY HIGHWAY 2 SECONDARY HIGHWAY 751 RAILWAY

Produced by Recource Data Division, Alberta Environmental Protection
Base map provided by Spatial Data Warehouse
February 1999

Opening Remarks

Mr. John Boyle, Deputy Mayor, City of Grande Prairie

John Boyle welcomed delegates to the conference with an invitation to explore the busy centre that Grande Prairie has become in the last few years. The city has experienced tremendous growth, now boasting a population of 36,000. An additional 75,000 people live within 100 kilometres of the city, and 175,000 within a 200 kilometre radius. It's this regional population that helps the city grow, Boyle noted.

Mike Cardinal
Minister of Resource Development
MLA Athabasca/Wabasca

"The purpose of Challenge North is to discuss development opportunities and challenges that face the region within the next five to 10 years," Cardinal told delegates in his opening address.

Over $50 billion of planned investment has been announced for economic initiatives in the province, mostly within northern Alberta's boundaries. Cardinal said the biggest challenge facing the north is keeping industrial projects moving without interruption. While northern Albertans have the opportunity to maximize economic benefits within the area, they must also heed infrastructure challenges related to housing, road networks, school systems, hospitals, policing, water and sewer systems, and the availability of residential, commercial and industrial land.

Mr. Cardinal commented specifically on several of these concerns.

- **Small communities** struggle to address infrastructure needs because they do not have the borrowing capability of larger centres. There is also difficulty in attracting developers for subdivision development. Affordable housing is lacking and conventional lenders are not readily available to finance loans and mortgages.
- **Skills development** is of crucial concern. While economic development in the next 10 years is going to create thousands of jobs, people must be prepared to take advantage of them. Interest is not lacking. Over 65% of northern Alberta high-school students are interested in training for technical trades. *"We have to look at how to make changes to enable them to gain the skills they need to participate in the economy,"* said Cardinal. He suggested introducing apprenticeship and work experience programs earlier in high school and increasing the number of bursary programs available to students in post-secondary programs.
- **There is a lack of available financing options** for small start-up businesses.
- **Assisting in the transition for Aboriginal people** is another important concern. An objective of the Government of Alberta is to support initiatives that will strongly link jobs and business opportunities for First Nations people in resource development. Nearing completion, the Government of Alberta's Aboriginal Policy Framework will clarify government and industry responsibilities related to Aboriginal issues and traditional land uses.

** Please note, at the time of this conference, the Honourable Mike Cardinal was the Associate Minister of Forestry. He has since been appointed Minister of Resource Development.*

Session Streams

1. Planning for Progress

Mr. Russell Carr
Partner
Carr Leiren & Associates

"Try to position issues in the context of business and government change."

Facing fundamental changes

As keynote speaker, Russell Carr set the stage for ***Challenge North: Planning for Progress*** by describing the fundamental changes initiated by government in the early 1990s. He explained the effects of the new policy climate on the economy, businesses and communities. Everyone from public policy managers to small business owners has had to significantly change their perspective to adapt to the changed regional and global climate, Carr emphasized.

To succeed within the new parameters, Albertans must understand the new government framework. Northern Albertans can respond effectively to change if they make a commitment to *"life-long unlearning"* of frameworks entrenched in their minds. They have to learn the new frameworks—how to work with the new responsibilities of governance—to analyze issues and identify opportunities.

Carr emphasized that in developing opportunities, northern Albertans must take care to ensure community growth is dedicated to equity and a healthy civic culture. As the economy moves away from a dependency on natural resources to one based on information, the future will depend on human resources, said Carr. Therefore, people need more than enhanced work skills, they need to learn how to participate in their civic culture.

Carr encouraged delegates to create frameworks for their own organizations and to identify other organizations with whom developing an interdependent relationship would be beneficial.

The Changing Context

"The most significant change in context for all of us today is the changing nature of governance in the province and in the country."

Carr asked delegates to consider what the changes mean for everyone involved in northern development.

In 1992, the Klein revolution changed the role of the provincial government, enhanced the role of markets, individual responsibility and, most important, the role of communities.

The government's role now is to facilitate participation in the economy.

By integrating income support and vocational training programs, for example, government underscored this new role and the principle of enhanced individual responsibility. Such changes reflect a fundamental shift in the concept of citizenship that previously included entitlement. Now, individuals' entitlement is directly tied to participation in the economy. Accompanying such philosophical shifts, regulatory reform and privatization have expanded the role of markets, which are now both expected and allowed to do more.

As a result of new roles and responsibilities, organizations must look beyond government, recognize interdependencies and create coalitions and partnerships.

Key roles: Government and communities

The provincial government's focus is to offer core services, such as education and health, and assist communities in becoming self-reliant.

Communities are responsible for economic as well as social policy. Programs such as social housing, once funded by government, have become a community responsibility. In adapting to the new parameters, communities face equity and accountability issues they have not previously dealt with. They must take care, Carr stated, to *"preserve or enhance equity,"* ensuring, for example, that the health status of *all* northern Albertans improves.

Communities are also assuming responsibility for allocating resources received from the private and voluntary sectors. They must, said Carr, apply the same diligence to managing these resources as they did those of the public sector.

New boundaries

Looking beyond Alberta's borders, Carr noted that governments have changed "universally" in scope. With the dramatic shift caused by free trade, Canada can no longer be defined as a nation-state. Carr suggested Canadians have four levels of citizenship—global, national (becoming increasingly less consequential), provincial (increasingly taking an economic definition) and regional.

With the blurring of jurisdictional lines, northern Albertans are faced with developing their own culture.

The means to address issues

"To successfully resolve issues, related technical, political and cultural factors must be addressed," Carr said. *"Take into account technical aspects of an issue, but recognize political and cultural factors as equally important. Dealing with intensive livestock concerns, for example, goes beyond managing manure—opposition to livestock operations often surfaces because the nature of the business clashes with traditional farm culture."*

The importance of analytical frameworks

"Create an analytical framework for your organization", Carr challenged delegates. The process forces you to think through policy and management challenges and reveals partnership opportunities. A framework shows you how to see issues from various points of view.

In rapid growth situations such as the ones faced by the north, organizations need to:

1. Distinguish between policy and management, otherwise problems arise. *"Management is about the resource, but policy comes out of social structure,"* Carr offered. Policy analysis is necessary to ensure equitable allocation of resources.
2. Distinguish between policy research and policy analysis. Policy research quantifies and provides information. Policy analysis recognizes the philosophy of government and considers information in relation to that philosophy. Information is useful only in context.

Key issues

- **Accountability**: Natural trading areas encourage greater interdependence. Interdependence develops accountability.
- **Self-reliance**: As jurisdictional boundaries blur, policy is developed based on interrelationships.
- **Building communities**: Regions have to assume most of the responsibility for building their communities. Examining political and cultural issues is equally important to addressing technical issues during this process.
- **Measurement**: *"We have to track how we're doing in social cohesion."*

Evaluating challenges and opportunities

As they assess economic development opportunities, northern Albertans should ask themselves:

- What is the relationship of the challenge/ opportunity to building communities?
- What is the potential for wealth generation?
- What is the potential for wealth distribution? *"If it's badly skewed, it will make the situation worse."*
- What are the environmental and social determinants? Will they increase differentiation among social groups?
- How can positive outcomes be brought about? When evaluating economic opportunities, consider their "multiple outcomes." Broaden your focus.
- How will this affect markets and communities? Improve problem definition with policy analysis based on more than statistics and research.

2. The Good News

Dr. Michael Percy
Stanley A. Milner Professor and Dean
Faculty of Business, The University of Alberta

"There's good news for northern Alberta's economy," opened Dr. Michael Percy. Percy reviewed historical and current statistics to illustrate the north's continued economic growth and reassure anyone nervously anticipating an economic downturn that *"the north will have a soft landing even if the rest of the economy slides."*

Currently, northern Alberta is thriving and making a significant contribution to the Canadian economy. The region is fuelling the growth for most of the $50 billion in capital investment in Alberta. Edmonton is predicted to become the most rapidly growing metropolitan region in Canada, in large part because it links the north with the rest of the province.

Summarizing the current economic activity in northern Alberta, Percy pointed to the signs of continued growth:

1. relatively long construction contracts;
2. no wage increases or inflation;
3. almost full employment ;
4. continued access to U.S. markets.

Percy noted that while the oil sands are "safe" economically, forestry experiences dramatic variability due to the high price of maintaining access to U.S. markets. Expansion in the north also leads to worker migrations, which strain community infrastructures.

Have no fear

Percy explained that Alberta's current 28% growth rate does not replicate the economic climate that led to *"the shock of '81 and the crunch of '86."* Even if the economy as a whole were to experience a recession, at worst, Percy emphasized, northern Alberta would experience a *"slowdown"*.

The region is now in the midst of its largest and longest expansion in the post-war period. Forecasts call for even more economic activity, partly driven by the magnitude of capital investments. However, *"we live in a cyclical economy,"* Percy noted, so we cannot expect growth to continue at the present rate. He predicts *"a standard business cycle turning point,"* or cyclical downturn will occur, but not immediately.

The overview

Free trade *"has had an unambiguously positive effect in the Canadian and Alberta economies."* Two aspects are particularly noteworthy, according to Percy:

1. Canada's exports to the US are increasing.
2. 34% of our trade is still in unprocessed or semi-processed goods. The markets for these products are extremely volatile, driven in many cases by non-market factors, such as policy decisions and product subsidies.

Canada has made significant gains in exporting manufactured, agricultural and electrical products, and in tradable services, such as software, business consulting and engineering exports. Despite Alberta's significant strides in diversifying its business services for global export, the economy is still largely driven by energy, forestry and agriculture.

Compared to Canada as a whole, Alberta's gross domestic product (GDP) was 25% greater in 1997 and 1998, its labour participation rate higher and its education attainment levels the highest in the country.

While Alberta had the most capital-intensive production of any province, variability for the period stands out, emphasizing Alberta's highly cyclical economy.

Variability

Fluctuations in the north's economy—much greater than on a national level—make planning difficult. This variability also leads to large population migrations, one of the greatest problems Alberta faces.

Since 1988, however, relative variability has declined. Alberta is more stable than B.C., for example. Free trade, more market power as a result of increased value-added production, diversified manufacturing and increased tradable business services have created the flexibility necessary to absorb price declines. Government policies and tax efforts have also encouraged diversification and lowered the individual's tax burden.

A variable economy causes industry expansion, "the boom", followed by its operational mode, "the slowdown". The expansion phase creates infrastructure challenges related to sudden population growth. In a variable economy, corporations must exercise financial prudence and maintain clean balance sheets, while households must focus on reducing debt.

What could "go bump"?

At some point, there will be an economic downturn which could be caused by:

1. **Climate change**
   This issue *"has the potential to be as divisive as the National Energy Program (NEP), with as significant an effect on investments in energy-producing industries."* The ripple effect would significantly reduce economic activity.

2. **Stock market readjustment**
   Percy predicted the stock-market bubble will burst. *"Eventually the value of stocks will fall and the economy will slow down."* Percy compared the mania for tech-stock investing to property speculation in late 1970s. *"There will be some adjustment, and the severity will determine the trigger for the associated slowdown."*

3. **Challenges**
   Percy identified the following issues northern Albertans must address to maintain economic prosperity:

   – **Continued access** to the U S markets

   – **Climate change**
   "Policy changes related to climate change will be critical." Alberta has to find a way to meet Kyoto targets of a 27% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions at the least cost, employing strategies that are market-driven, not punitive. To date, Alberta has led the way in trying to bring good economic analysis to assessing the benefits and costs of alternate political strategies to deal with climate change.

   – **Environment**
   "Environmental issues are *fundamental*!"

   A 1997 poll showed *Albertans "have deep-seated concerns about the environment."* Percy believes an integrated federal-provincial process is needed to address environmental issues. *"Economic development is not inconsistent with good environmental management."*

   – **Public consultation**
   Albertans deserve consultation that is inclusive and transparent. The provincial government is adept at this, Percy said, but regional authorities are lagging behind.

   – **Regional cooperation**
   Companies responsible for east-west rail routes must cooperate.

3. Towards Consensus

Mr. Patrick Moore
Chair
Forest Practices Committee of the Forest Alliance of B.C.

"Today environmental thinkers are divided along quite sharp fault lines. There are the doom-sayers who predict the collapse of the global ecosystem; there are the technological optimists who believe that through science and technology we can feed 12 billion people and solve all the world's problems."

The middle road is based on science and logic, said Moore, noting that there's much we can do to improve our environment.

A Greenpeace founder, Moore spent 16 years mastering the art of confrontation politics. In the last decade, he has made his business the politics of consensus. Moore was highly critical of extreme environmentalists, who *"have abandoned science and logic,"* he claims.

He maintains the *"mainstream environmental movement has fallen prey to misguided priorities, misinformation, dogmatism and self-interest."*

We can reduce our negative impact on the environment, but changes must be *"socially acceptable and technologically and economically feasible"*. To succeed, we have to make efforts to find consensus among competing interests.

Misinformation on the loose

Moore believes misinformation thwarts environmental truth and progress towards consensus. He blamed an irresponsible environmental movement for *"whipping up a frenzy"* among the public based on unsubstantiated claims. Lack of information is another culprit which adversely influences public response. The genetically modified organisms (GMO) industry, for example, *"has not done a good job of educating people"* about GMOs, resulting in a substantial degree of public mistrust.

Moore roundly criticized respected media and environmental organizations for publishing misinformation. *"They have fallen prey to the prophets of doom,"* he said. Calling on the media for better quality information, Moore allowed that although *"it's legitimate to be cautious, we can't allow caution to stop us in our tracks."* Citing the debate over pesticide use, Moore told his audience *"not all pesticides cause problems of the magnitude of DDT."* Those problems *"are no reason to ban all pesticides."*

Climate change

Moore emphasized that addressing climate change is primarily a matter of risk management. Because we have no point of comparison, we can't expect definitive answers to our concerns related to global warming. While he believes a changing climate will produce both positive and negative effects, Moore concluded with the observation that *"it's up to us to decide how big a premium to pay."*

No more forests?

Moore does not debate the fact that mankind has been responsible for the extinction of some species, but he does take issue with the World Wildlife Fund's claim that commercial logging can be blamed for *"massive deforestation in industrial countries"* causing species extinction. Moore cited data from a food and agricultural organization that showed the forested area of industrialized countries is actually growing at 2% per year.

Trees are the answer

"Biodiversity and forests are profoundly interrelated," said Moore. He maintains that growing more trees and using more wood (both as a substitute for nonrenewable fossil fuels and materials such as steel, concrete and plastic, and as paper products for printing packaging and sanitation) will help us:

- move to a more sustainable economy based on renewable fuels and materials;
- improve literacy and sanitation in developing countries while reversing deforestation and protecting wildlife;

- reduce amounts of greenhouse gases and CO_2 emitted to the atmosphere;
- increase the amount of land that can support a greater diversity of species;
- help prevent soil erosion and provide clean air and water;
- make the world more beautiful and green.

Moore emphasized that climate change is mainly a result of the consumption of fossil fuels and emission of carbon dioxide (CO_2), and that the risk to bio-diversity is caused by clearing forests for agriculture and cities, not by forestry, *"which replaces the forest."*

Moore is convinced that the *"cut fewer trees, use less wood"* policy invoked by environmentalists is actually an anti-environment sentiment.

Environmental view of 21st century

The development of a rational environmental policy means moving towards an economy based on renewable energy and material resources. *"Non-renewable resources should be used wisely and recycled wherever practicable."*

As well, we must:

- learn to manage the population voluntarily. The most effective way is to educate and empower women.
- develop a globally-unified analysis of the relationships among land use, energy and resource consumption, forests and bio-diversity and population.
- learn to be better gardeners at local and global levels. This requires more intensive agricultural production, including the use of fertilizers, synthetic pesticides and biotechnology. Using less land used to grow food will free up more for trees and wilderness.
- control urban sprawl; create denser more liveable cities.
- stabilize or reverse deforestation of the tropics.

Sustainable development requires *"compromise and cooperation with the involvement of government, industry, academia and the environmental movement"*

4. Welcome to Climate Change Central

Ms. Elaine McCoy, Q. C.
President of the Macleod Institute for Environmental Analysis
The University of Calgary

A Made-in-Alberta Response: Alberta's strategy and action plan for climate change

"To ignore this issue is to invite disaster."

In 1998, a group of concerned individuals supported by the Alberta Economic Development Authority (AEDA) made recommendations to address climate change in Alberta. These stakeholders from forestry, transportation, construction and the resource industries recognized climate change as the biggest economic and marketplace issue on the horizon.

"It was necessary to do something, because companies were in disarray: many were ignoring the issue, some were actively campaigning against it, and a few were proactive," explained McCoy. Government ministers were split on the issue. A coordinated response was badly needed to address climate change.

The Alberta government adopted the group's recommendations and in April 1999, 100 opinion leaders, representing the full spectrum of Alberta's economy, met for a day-and-a-half of roundtable discussions to develop a strategy and action plan. These were presented to and endorsed by Premier Ralph Klein.

The action plan recommended the immediate formation of a coordinating body to develop strategies and serve as a catalyst and coordinator of activities devoted to climate change issues. In response, the provincial government created Climate Change Central (C3) with an 18-member, multi-sector stakeholder board of directors, a small core staff and $2 million in funding per year for three years.

C3 Activities:

- Education and capacity-building *"to give Albertans the tools they need to respond in a*

responsible way to increased energy productivity and to promote the wise use of resources in homes and businesses."

- Forming alliances, facilitating partnerships, creating an information clearinghouse, using competitive intelligence, engaging in policy analysis and identifying and removing barriers.
- Starting pilot and demonstration projects, initiatives and programs and handing them off to stakeholders.
- Monitoring and measuring adaptive responses: *"You have to measure to know you're getting ahead."*

Consumption drives emissions

McCoy reminded the delegates that consumption, not production, drives emissions. Because Alberta exports most of its oil (90%) and gas (80%), *"when you talk about greenhouse gas emissions, you're talking about consumption taking place elsewhere."*

To show where the responsibility lies for reducing greenhouse gases in Alberta, McCoy pointed to the consumption of fossil fuels by sector:

- Electricity production — 2%
- Fossil fuel production — 8%
- Residential and commercial — 24%

Risk management

McCoy noted three types of risk associated with climate change: environmental, economic and political.

1) Environmental

"This is an experiment you really don't want to run, because if it fails, you can't reverse it."

2) Economic

The European Union (EU) has used the climate change threat to change marketplace rules, said McCoy. Further restrictions could have an extremely adverse economic effect on Alberta.

3) Political

If we don't act, unpalatable policies may be imposed on Canada under the Kyoto Protocol.

Risk-management approach

- We have to manage external risks.
- We must be able to demonstrate to the world that we're responsible.
- We have to take action.
- We have to engage all Albertans: individuals, organizations, schools, hospitals, municipalities and the provincial government.

What can we do?

Alberta leads the world in environmental best practices and can sell related technologies, McCoy pointed out, citing industry participation in CO_2 management and sequestration techniques. Alberta can do even more, she assured delegates:

- We have to envision new ways of using technology.
- We have to form partnerships.
- We have to monitor: monitoring and measurement show when you're getting ahead.

Challenges equate opportunities in eco-efficiency

Alberta industry must boost eco-efficiencies to stay competitive in the global marketplace. McCoy emphasized that *"business in the north is very much a key to responding to climate change."*

Adopting practices to increase productivity brings about the greatest degree of energy efficiency because it reduces inputs. McCoy stressed that opportunities already exist to provide cost benefits, such as:

- opportunities in the oil and gas industries for increasing production efficiencies and for servicing these industries;
- new opportunities for carbon dioxide use;
- developing new or more efficient electric pumps (the highest consumers of electricity), particularly for industrial processes;
- achieving energy efficiencies in construction (citing significant energy reductions achieved when architects and engineers collaborated to build Hinton's energy-efficient town hall, McCoy pointed out that additional planning costs will be offset by operational savings within three years.)

The C3 initiative promotes partnerships and encourages development of fuel alternatives such as bio-mass, wind power and solar panels. The group is keeping close watch of successful ventures elsewhere, such as the Sacramento Municipal Utility District's experiment. The Sacramento Municipal Utility District worked with regulators and consumers to provide solar panels to customers who requested them (at no cost to the customer). This exceptionally successful project produced the perfect partnership, where everyone was engaged in a creative response to a need.

Carbon sinks

In Alberta, TransAlta Corporation has initiated an arrangement with Iowa farmers who can demonstrate they are sequestering CO_2 through their low tillage practices. The sequestering offsets emissions, producing emission credits which the farmers can sell. Obvious partnerships exist in Alberta for similar collaborations between the forestry and energy-producing industries.

Introducing K-rations

If Canada signs the Kyoto Protocol, the federal government will be required to allocate greenhouse gas emissions across the country. Allowable emissions (K-rations) will be allocated to regions, industries or individual companies. Because companies, institutions and individuals may well be able to achieve 50% reductions in their own operations, trading in K-rations presents new economic opportunities, such as:

- emissions trading;
- investing in green projects;
- establishing a theoretical marketplace where demonstrated energy savings can be sold.

5. Oil and Gas in the North

Mr. Pierre Alvarez
President
Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers (CAPP)

"There has to be a reasonable balance between preserving the environment and preserving the jobs and economic prosperity that this industry brings to Alberta."

Pierre Alvarez took the podium to remind delegates of the importance of oil and gas investments to northern Alberta, to point out barriers the industry faces in resource exploration and extraction, and to clarify industry requirements for continued activity in Alberta's north.

Oil and gas industry benefits

The oil and gas industries bring substantial benefits *"to both the province and to local communities in terms of jobs, direct spending, economic spin-offs, training and social benefits,"* Alvarez stated.

"Petroleum producers are experiencing a time of great opportunity in northern Alberta", said Alvarez, listing $25 billion in new oil sands development over the next ten years.

Natural gas activity is increasing in various northern regions, as gas prices continue to rise. As well, demand for natural gas in the U.S. is expected to increase significantly to 35 tcf by 2020. Northern Alberta, *"given the ability to access the resources,"* will play a role in supplying the gas. Furthermore, transportation of Arctic gas may offer potential if the supply route chosen is a Mackenzie Valley pipeline into northern Alberta.

"On the job front, the northward movement of oil and gas development will help reduce northern Alberta's historically high levels of unemployment, encourage higher levels of education and find work for northern Alberta's rapidly growing population of young people, especially among First Nations and Métis people," said Alvarez.

In Alberta, the oil and gas industry:

- employs 180,000 people;
- spends $23 billion ($14 billion on capital investment, $4.4 billion on provincial royalties and land bonuses);
- reinvests in local economies (35% of industry revenues in 1999).

In northern Alberta, the industry provides considerable employment opportunities, has further diversified the region's economy and raised income levels that are generally below the provincial average:

- Every $1 million invested in expansion results in three person-years of direct construction employment. Projects such as the Alliance Pipeline provide long-term employment for technical operations staff, as well as a great deal of seasonal employment. The Rocky Mountain foothill wells are long-life wells and employ hundreds of people over the long term.
- Industry jobs pay well, and today many are in high-tech areas.
- Industry offers excellent ongoing training to all employees, providing them with *"fresh, diverse skills to keep pace with ever-changing technologies and global economic realities."*

Industry is committed to providing employment, education and training for Aboriginal people. At Syncrude, 13% of the employees are of Aboriginal heritage. In conjunction with Grande Prairie Regional College, CAPP has implemented a training program to provide more educational opportunities for First Nations youth. It is also working with the Petroleum Industry Training Service (PITS) to develop other training programs for regions of northern Alberta.

The oil and gas industry encourages growth in other industry sectors. Calgary for example, has made great gains in the high-tech area in response to oil and gas industry needs. Similarly, the large oil and gas servicing industry now has the size and capability to pursue business beyond Alberta, shipping skilled workers and expertise to the Northwest and Yukon Territories.

Public concerns

Industry-landowner relations

Recognizing the increased potential for disputes between land users and industry, Alvarez announced that CAPP has recently endorsed guidelines that will involve the public throughout the development process of proposed activities. As well, the association sits on advisory panels, "reviewing public safety associated with sour gas development and gas plant grandfathering."

Environmental concerns

To address environmental concerns, CAPP has initiated and an Environment, Health and Safety Stewardship Program, which provides "guidelines for participating companies to evaluate, improve and monitor their Environment Health and Safety (EH&S) programs."

He emphasized that environmental regulations must be based on solid scientific information.

Alvarez suggested that industry has not effectively communicated to the public its environmental improvements, such as:

- narrowed seismic cuts;
- reduced flaring volumes by 25%;
- reduced benzene emissions by 50%;
- in northern Alberta, adaptation to seasonal restrictions to protect caribou and moose;
- development of new technologies to "lighten [industry's] footprint on the land."

Climate change

The eventual ratification of the Kyoto Protocol will impose restrictions on greenhouse gas emissions but will increase demand for natural gas throughout North America, which will spur industry to meet increased need.

Issues affecting industry growth

Alvarez put his industry's concerns for its future prosperity squarely on the table. *"Our access to resources is being compromised throughout Alberta by a*

lack of consolidated policy and regulatory framework . . . Unnecessary and costly roadblocks are threatening our competitiveness."

He listed concerns with:

- overlapping and out-of-date regulatory regimes. Alvarez emphasized that regulations must be well thought out, orderly and fair, clearly defined, with a single access point.
- access to resources on a shrinking land base. Restricted lands such as caribou areas, ecological and military reserves, national parks and associated buffer zones are currently off limits.
- lengthy time frames associated with changes to policies and legislation;
- ensuring companies are adequately compensated when new regulations curtail development on leases.
- "ever-increasing" demand for consultation; Consultation processes need to be quickly and clearly defined.
- slow resolution to First Nations and Métis land claims.
- threats to competitiveness by exploration and production costs, which are high compared to those of other oil producing nations.

What will it take to ensure continued prosperity?

- Reasonable access to resources;
- Certainty of process;
- Ability to compete globally.

Reaction Panel

1. Agriculture

Mr. Henry Vos
Owner
Three Fox Farm

While Henry Vos expressed confidence in the long-term future of agriculture, he noted that world agriculture is based on an imperfect economy, ruled by subsidies. Subsidies encourage increased production which artificially inflates production and depresses prices. Grain prices in Canada today do not even cover the cost of production. Ironically, this has resulted in low feed prices and a thriving livestock industry.

Vos clearly believes Canada's agricultural policy is not changing fast enough, Preferring open markets, Vos suggested the federal government's position on world trade is *"wishy-washy."*

Vos identified three trends affecting agriculture:

- **Consumers' disposable incomes will support niche products.**
  Niche markets, such as bison products, are growing faster than overall food consumption. Consumers are demanding quality assurance for their food, creating more opportunities for *"identity-preserved production"* which traces products from the soil to retail shelf.
- **Agriculture is becoming more capital intensive,** and farmers need support to weather production-price cycles. Vos suggested alliances with finance organizations, lease arrangements and safety nets as possible routes to providing some security.
- **Labour requirements have changed**. Agriculture needs trained, skilled and experienced people.

The emphasis on value-added production demands more resources and entrepreneurs. We need to encourage young people to work in agriculture and provide them with top quality education. Vos would also like to see the federal government develop immigration policies that attract more agricultural expertise.

2. The Métis Perspective

Mr. Allan Lamouche
Aboriginal Small Business Vice Chair of
Gift Lake Métis Settlement
President
Resco Oil and Gas

Métis demographics

There are eight Métis settlements in Alberta, with 1.25 million acres of land recently relinquished by the Province and passed to the Métis people to help them achieve autonomy.

Gift Lake, just northeast of High Prairie, is similar (demographically) to the other Métis settlements in the province. It has a population of 800 and offers education from kindergarten to grade nine and adult upgrading courses. For further education, residents must leave the community. High school students leave home to live in Grouard, the closest community with a secondary school.

Many of the features of Gift Lake are similar to those of the other Métis settlements:

- 50% of the population is under the age of 24.
- Income levels are lower than in other rural areas of Alberta.
- There is a higher rate of unemployment in Gift Lake than in other rural areas.
- The land has much less productive capability than other agricultural areas.

Collecting and reviewing demographic information helps the Métis communities determine how to develop sustainability and self-reliance and conduct their local governments.

Gift Lake's small businesses are plagued by high fuel and insurance costs, and a difficulty in finding skilled workers. Problems faced by small business elsewhere are compounded here because of the community's small size and remote location. It is a challenge to entice industry to such locations.

Community concerns about regional development focus on:

- clear-cut forestry;
- removal of resources;
- low water levels in lakes.

Métis communities want to know how to attain required education levels, develop businesses and become part of the regional economy. They want to know how to establish partnerships and govern themselves.

Issues for Métis communities

Community and traditional values are important. Elders and others resist development opportunities and changes that could have a negative impact on their environment. The settlements want development, but ask at what speed and what cost?

The Métis want to know who owns the resources and how sustainable resource development can be ensured. They want to minimize the impact of development, ensure education—even survival—for their children. The communities are seeking partnerships with neighbouring municipalities and with the resource industries. They want their people to have input into development and access to capital to participate in the resource sector.

Forums, such as ***Challenge North***: ***Planning for Progress*** address these issues. More importantly, industry and government must continue to involve Aboriginal people in discussions related to development that affect Métis people.

3. Mining

Mr. Mike Dufresne
Consultant with Apex Geoscience Ltd.

The mining industry in Canada

In 1998, the mining industry:

- generated $26.4 billion, or 3.7% of Canada's GDP;
- employed 367,000 Canadians;
- provided one of the highest average weekly earnings in Canada.

Currently, the sector is experiencing a slight decline because the high-risk capital required to explore and develop mines has shifted overseas. Over 75% of mining capital is invested outside of Canada.

Based on geological potential, the sector shouldn't be in decline. *"We've barely begun to tap Canada's wealth in minerals,"* Dufresne said. Many deposits have yet to be found. Indeed, most of northern Canada has not been explored.

However, capital loss to high-tech investments, depressed metal prices and greater competition for the high-risk capital needed for exploration is contributing to the mining industry's decline here.

To grow, the industry needs access to sufficiently large tracts of land, clear regulatory direction and land-use planning. *"We need to recognize lands that are high potential and make sure we have access to them for developing mines,"* Dufresne maintained.

The biggest issue for the mining industry is *"the slow, expensive, constantly changing regulatory regime,"* burdened by intense negotiations among mining, Aboriginal and environmental groups, which lengthens the process that takes a discovery into production.

Canada could be a major power of the world's diamond market, controlling a 10 – 15% share, observed Dufresne.

Presently, no mines operate in northern Alberta, although in 1999, $70 million was spent on gold, diamond, precious gem and base metal exploration.

There have been some excellent discoveries, including titanium in Fort McMurray and the Pelican Mountains.

Mining provides sustainable economic diversification. While it takes time to explore potential and develop mines, the level of revenue provided by just one or two mines can be substantial, producing $25 to $50 billion in 25 to 30 years. The average exploration cycle is 10 to 15 years, and the mining life cycle is 15 to 25 years. There are tremendous economic spin-offs during all phases— exploratory, developmental and commercialization.

Issues and Benefits

Economic and environmental impacts *"are huge issues and need to be talked about openly,"* observed Dufresne.

Recognizing that only the uplands of northern Alberta are favourable for mineral development, mining companies want to be involved in land-use planning in those areas.

While the exploration stage has little environmental impact—due to technological advances of the last ten years—the mining stage involves large tracts of land, often between one and four sections. Land reclamation must be done properly.

Benefits are reaped locally and regionally long after a mine closes in terms of the transferable skills acquired by employees. Mines provide substantive and sustainable revenue and local employment during all mining phases. The industry hires large suppliers and local subcontractors, and hires and trains local residents.

Skills learned can later be applied to oil and gas, water and aggregate industries. Value-added skills include geological and computer skills. The Northwest Territories diamond mine, for example, sponsored training in diamond-cutting. With the large discoveries of titanium in Northern Alberta, value-added potential arises for refining and manufacturing the metal.

4. High-Tech Potential for the North

Mr. Cameron Tofer
Producer
Bioware Corporation

Silicon Prairie

Cameron Tofer works in Grande Prairie for Bioware Corporation, a company that produces computer games. The start-up company of five employees in 1996 will have grown to 100 by the end of 2000.

Tofer would like to see northern Alberta's high-tech students put to work locally. Vast numbers of high-tech students from the north are *"fleeing into other markets"* in the U.S. and Europe, he suggested. Tofer thinks the resource here can be captured and capitalized on. Twenty-three per cent of Bioware employees are from Grande Prairie. To emphasize the demand and competition for qualified high-tech workers, Tofer pointed to the U.S. NAFTA quota for this sector. This year's quota, set at 60,000, has been met, and next year's has been increased to 200,000.

Northern Alberta has all the ingredients to support a high-tech industry:

- access to high-speed bandwidth for the Internet;
- people with high-tech expertise;
- low cost of living—compared to Silicon Valley;
- better access to the Internet than Silicon Valley, due to the Valley's high utilization rates.

Tofer has been working with Grande Prairie Community College for two years to help instructors develop and focus courses relevant to the computer industry. *"Two-year graduates can now go anywhere and get a job"*, claimed Tofer. They are the beginning of a steady stream of industry-ready graduates.

Northern Alberta has everything necessary to develop a successful high-tech industry. *"Now all that's needed"*, suggested Tofer, is some "company inertia"—a nest of companies situated together, a Silicon Prairie—to compete with the world.

5. Municipal and Services

Mr. John Trefanenko
Mayor
Town of St. Paul

The economy in northern Alberta is progressing except in agricultural communities, maintains John Trefanenko. Many agricultural towns and service centre municipalities have difficulty remaining viable. Many depend on agriculture. They struggle to survive without the new engines of the big industries such as oil and gas. Some are still trying to recover from debt loads acquired in the 1970s and '80s.

Agricultural towns are concerned. When farming areas suffer, the municipalities suffer with them. Statistics released in 1999 show:

- 67% of Canadian farmers expected to lose money in 1999;
- 50% of farmers expected to be out of business within two years if current conditions continue;
- grain prices are at depression levels;
- grain producers compete with those who receive high subsidies.

Trefanenko recommended governments enhance food processing and agribusiness opportunities across northern Alberta. Manufacturing and processing endeavours are essential to the strengthening of communities across the region.

Agricultural communities are concerned about:

- **the education tax**. They want to see education funded a different way;
- **policing.** Only 63 out of 370 municipalities pay policing costs (In St. Paul, 26% of municipal taxes goes to policing);
- **population decline in rural communities**. Governments have to work together to decentralize industry, particularly by encouraging agribusiness;
- **Aboriginal communities**. These communities need seed money to become self-reliant.

Workshops

1. Transportation in the North

A Air Transportation
Mr. Albert Cooper
President
Peace Air

Albert Cooper sees numerous growth opportunities for northern Alberta air transportation systems. Noting that Peace Air has grown from 15 to 40 employees in a year, Cooper is not concerned about finding opportunities, but how to make the most of them.

Air transport companies will be successful if they look at their operations from a northern perspective, suggested Cooper. He outlined the significant changes that have recently taken place in the industry, and the needs of small northern Alberta airlines.

- Airports have become a community responsibility. Industry (within communities) that has embraced this challenge is doing well; reluctance has had adverse effects on business.
- Because of the introduction of WestJet, its cheap fares and high density routes, more communities now want access to similar fares and service.
- The merger between Air Canada and Canadian Airlines will reduce competition and flights to northern Alberta, and result in route and schedule consolidation and a dramatic shift drop in service.
- Airlines will use smaller planes with fewer seats and less cargo space to service some northern Alberta communities.
- Service to northern Alberta will increasingly depend on the needs of the southern Alberta.
- The introduction of user fees has increased costs both to airlines and to consumers.

Despite these obstacles, Cooper emphasized the opportunity for *"a whole new northern industry"* based on local needs and decisions that could create local jobs.

Cooper noted the requirements of small northern airlines:

- Fair treatment by NAVCanada
- Support from local fliers
- Support from business and community leaders
- Support from travel agents
- Capital to grow

Cooper believes in investing in the people of Northern Alberta by spending money locally on equipment, systems and services.

B Rail Transportation in Northern Alberta
Mr. Clayton Jones
General Manager of RailLink – Mackenzie Northern

Viable rail transportation benefits all sectors of Alberta, Clayton Jones maintains. However, similar to air transport companies, northern Alberta rail companies must service a small customer base and vast service area. RailLink's 600-mile system is a large-volume, long-distance shipper, also offering a niche market in short-haul traffic.

While the northern railway industry has evolved to create locally focused operations in northwest Alberta and the Northwest Territories, it needs support to be competitive, particularly as an enhanced trucking industry and improved roads have increased competition.

The industry has kept pace with technological advances. Rail cars have twice the capacity of cars in the 1950s; track maintenance crews are connected to a rail-traffic control centre in North Bay, Ontario; and the technologies and computers used are coordinated out of a computer in Atlanta, Georgia. Business is therefore, more effective and cost efficient.

However, public perception, Jones suggested, maintains that railways are like public utilities. They are in fact, profit-driven and have shareholder responsibilities.

Jones pointed out that RailLink's business is not growing or keeping pace with the costs of running the business. Lack of profit means the service must *"shrink-to-fit."* This could lead to line reductions.

Transportation is not a level playing field, Jones observed, and railways have a difficult time competing with constantly improving road systems and a growing trucking industry.

C Highways
Mr. Brian Marcotte
Executive Director
Alberta Infrastructure
Policy and Planning Branch

Alberta Infrastructure is responsible for the provincial highway system. Brian Marcotte listed current department initiatives:

- Construction of the four-lane, 1,120 kilometre, north-south trade corridor that connects the U.S. border to Lethbridge, Calgary, Edmonton and Grande Prairie.
- Implementation of recommendations from the Premier's task-force on transportation. The province has taken over full responsible for primary and secondary highway systems, saving municipalities $85,000 a year formerly designated for secondary roads.
- Increased funding for cities, towns and villages.
- Funding rural road studies to encourage municipalities to use the savings from secondary roads to improve local roads.
- Adoption of the Northwestern Ministers Long-term Road Network Plan. More east-west connections, such as a road between Peace River and Fort McMurray, will be made to B.C. and Saskatchewan.
- Taking over responsibility, including maintenance and upgrading, for some trade corridors (highways) that run through cities.
- Paving secondary highway 881 to Fort McMurray.
- Paving access roads to all eight Métis settlements.

" We are committed to a balanced, seamless, timely intermodal transportation department," Marcotte emphasized.

2. Public Services in the 21st Century

A Distance Learning
Mr. Dan Vandermeulen
President
Northern Lakes College

Distance delivery to small communities works. Northern Lakes College, established in 1970, now offers distance learning in 24 northern Alberta locations. From audio-conferencing in the 1980s to multi-modal (face-to-face, audio conferencing and CD-ROM) delivery begun in 1995, the college successfully offers high school and practical courses by distance learning.

The college *"has really taken off in the last five years,"* Dan Vandermeulen remarked. Course registrations increase annually. With regard to diploma courses, students' exam marks are equivalent to the rovincial averages. The practical nursing course has been particularly successful.

Elements of success

- 20 years experience in distance learning
- Technology is transparent and recognized as a tool
- Learner support services are emphasized
- Focus on interactivity between students and instructors and other students
- Core staff of dedicated instructors
- Organization has supportive culture

To provide distance learning technology in as many communities as possible, the college belongs to Alberta North, an alliance of seven educational institutions in northern Alberta. Students currently have access to eight learning centres and 55 access points to distance learning technology, minimizing disruption for students and their families.

Obstacles

- **Connectivity**- The college is "eating up increased bandwidth."

- **Telecommunications bills** are high. Moving to a wireless system, the college hopes to reduce telecommunications costs.

B Health care services
Mr. John Simpson
Chair
Mistahia Regional Health Authority

Health care is evolving. We need to think *"outside the box,"* John Simpson said, regarding future health care delivery *"and be bold in our approaches"*.

Health care is a cornerstone of economic growth and it is becoming an economic development issue. Companies lobby the Regional Health Authority (RHA) for improved services for their employees. Business has difficulty attracting skilled workers to communities lacking in good health care. Availability and quality of health care services are considerable factors in business relocations.

Health care challenges faced by northern Alberta:

- Service delivery to the scattered population living on the large land base of northern Alberta
- Keeping rural sites open
- Travel to deliver home care
- Timely access to service
- Recruitment and retention of physicians—most come from out of country.
- Attracting specialists and support staff
- Young population, working in high-risk industries, with injury rates above the provincial average
- Changing medical roles and practices—affects delivery of services, puts pressure on people and communities. (For example, first-time mothers cannot deliver their babies in their communities.)

Solutions

- Provide secondary services in major communities.
- Share specialists among regions.
- Allocate additional spaces for medical professionals at colleges and universities.
- Strengthen secondary education programs and training programs in northern Alberta colleges.
- Enhance the NADC bursary, encourage more return-for-service contracts to encourage northern Alberta students to return home after completing their education.
- Establish summer internship programs.
- Track students to establish where they are going (geographically).
- Allocate more funding for injury prevention.
- Develop a no-fault system for health professionals—liability costs are prohibitive.
- Invest in technology.
- Expand the roles of health professionals.

C Municipalities
Ms. Debra Lozinski
Reeve
Lakeland County

Lakeland became a county in July, 1998. With a population of 4,800, and a trading area of 10,000 Km^2 including an Indian reserve and Métis settlement, the county offers sectorally-diverse employment in a diverse economy. The county spends 80% to 90% of its budget on roads.

Partnering initiatives
The county:

- is a member of the Highway 881 Joint User Group, which has secured a commitment from government for the paving of the highway between Lac la Biche and Fort McMurray;
- is a member of the Route 36 Association, representing municipalities from the US border to Fort McMurray working to improve safety on this corridor;
- is involved with 24 municipalities to address drought in the region;
- meets regularly with adjacent municipalities.

General challenges

Municipalities need:

- strong commitment from local councillors reeves and mayors;
- improved communication among regional and municipal authorities;
- all sectors of the economy to address over-allocation of natural resources;
- to better market the benefits of living in the north.

Trends

- Growing markets for organic foods and products
- Production of alternative medicines and herbal remedies: preliminary research suggests the potency of active ingredients in herbs increases the further north the plants are grown
- Growth in eco-tourism.

Planning for progress involves:

- improving the quality of life for residents;
- providing access to essential public services and facilities for all residents;
- making sustainability of the environment fundamental to decision making;
- taking time to be proactive in local government.

D Apprenticeships
Mr. Franco Rusich
Supervisor
Alberta Learning, Apprenticeship and Industry Training

Franco Rusich updated delegates on the apprenticeship programs offered through Alberta Learning and on plans to address changing industry and labour needs. Apprenticeship training today includes traditional delivery methods, and peer or competency-based training, where some training is completed using computers or through distance learning. Welders, for example, can complete training modules by correspondence.

Currently, there are 50 apprenticeship trades in Alberta. However, as technology advances, the nature of the trades changes, creating new sub-trades and crafts within trades. Apprenticeship categories and requirements reflect these changes. In the heavy equipment area, for example, a one-year trailer mechanic apprenticeship has been subdivided into the categories of off-road and on-road mechanics.

As industry becomes increasingly automated, specialists are in higher demand. Employees need to be qualified in more than one trade to maintain operations. Combination apprenticeships of cross-craft trades address this industry requirement.

The Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) keeps young people in high school but allows them to focus on a trade while still completing their education. The work is paid and counts toward apprenticeship credits in addition to a high school diploma.

Occupations

Alberta Learning also hopes to establish occupational designations in response to requests to formally recognize the skills of labourers, such as gas-utility operators, warehouse plasterers and construction workers.

3. Regional Partnerships

A Economic Zones of Influence
Mr. Jim Edwards
President and CEO of Economic Development Edmonton

Jim Edwards works with the Alberta Economic Development Authority (AEDA). This unique private-sector agency advises the Minister of Economic Development and Premier on aspects related to long-term growth and a sustainable economy. With policy and tax changes in place to encourage industry diversity and growth, regions of northern Alberta can succeed by forging the right economic alliances.

To prosper however, regions must be clear about their particular economic interests, look beyond political boundaries and work to develop economic zones of influence. Consultations held in 1998 with representatives of 160 communities revealed similar economic issues across Alberta:

- Communities do not accept a cookie-cutter approach to economic development.
- The "Alberta Advantage" does not extend beyond the province's two major cities.
- Regions need to explore cooperative economic initiatives.
- Rural communities require improved access to technology.
- Regional and economic issues should not be constrained by political boundaries.

Communities can build on local strengths to sustain economic growth, Edwards emphasized. The 1998 consultations recommended a means be found to extend the "Alberta Advantage" to non-metropolitan Alberta. Regions should define and form themselves based on opportunity and mutual interests.

B Border-Crossings
Mr. Michael Riseborough
Executive Director
Northern Development Commission, B.C.

Michael Riseborough discussed the Northern Development Commission's role in social and economic development, efforts to diversify the region's economy and opportunities to build regional partnerships. He noted that the northern economies of B.C. and Alberta face similar challenges. Besides the partnerships already underway between the regions, many more opportunities exist for collaboration. Improving east-west air service in the north is one.

Formed in 1998, the Commission:

- focuses on economic development within three service areas created along industry sector lines. It does not address social issues;
- comprises two-thirds of B.C.'s land mass and 1,100 communities;
- is user-driven, providing support to assorted client groups: local, municipal and regional governments, tribal and band councils and community organizations.

The Commission provides business advice, helps develop business plans and facilitates feasibility studies. It faces challenges of capacity, focus, resistance to change, planning and expectations. Client communities, Riseborough maintained, need to move their focus away from primary resource extraction and move toward adding value to sustainable resources.

Global competition and high transportation costs are two major issues facing the north, observed Riseborough. Competing in a rapidly changing world is a reality: mining jobs earn $22 per hour in Canada, $7 per hour in Chile; slow-growing trees compete with genetically modified, fast-growing varieties which reach maturity within seven years in South America. High transportation costs contribute to the high costs of staying competitive.

Riseborough suggested our accelerating knowledge base and the speed of change today are keys to opportunity. To diversify we need to stay *"plugged in"*.

How do you spell DIVERSIFY?

- **D**etect change
- **I**dentify opportunities from change
- **V**alue add
- **E**xpand each opportunity one step further
- **R**eal estate planning to achieve the opportunity
- **S**elect the best products, processes and markets
- **I**nvestment procurement
- **F**inalize the project
- **Y**ou have to do it to compete

Projects of the Northern Development Commission:

- Examining potential for the commercial production of hemp
- Examining ways fish offal can be used as supplement for livestock
- Developing off-the-shelf business plan package for communities
- Working on tourism-opportunity studies
- Securing a $30 million investment for a destination resort complex
- Working with coastal communities to develop value-added seafood products
- Determining public willingness to enter into discussions to remove the moratorium on offshore oil and gas exploration
- Assisting groups studying uses of waste wood and a new pulping technology

4. Community Economic Development Strategies

A Developing an Economic Viability Strategy

Mr. Ray Wanuch
Economic Viability Strategy Coordinator
Métis Settlements General Council

The Métis settlements of Alberta are governed by the 1990 Métis Settlements Act. However, with government support and funding ending in 2007, the Métis Settlements General Council (MSGC) is developing an economic viability strategy to ensure future self-reliance and economic stability.

The MSGC has conducted studies on various opportunities that offer economic potential, Ray Wanuch told delegates. Industries studied included oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, wild-game ranching and diamond mining.

A great deal of Métis land is of marginal use for agriculture, observed Keating. However, it is suitable for pasturing bison, elk and wild boar.

A study commissioned through NADC conducted market research on alternative livestock products. The Peace Region's Métis settlements have particular advantages in this area. They have a large land base, of which 95% or more can be classified as organic, and the lowest feed costs in North America. Parties interested in taking advantage of these opportunities are forming a multi-species, new-generation marketing co-op of commercial, conventional and organic (natural) producers.

The settlements need access to capital. *"They are asset rich but cash poor,"* said Wanach. Their land-potential study showed that of the settlements' 1.25 million acres of land, most is class 4 or 5, suitable for hay and fodder but limited for other conventional agricultural uses. Similarly, the land has limited potential for forestry.

The Métis want to maintain their traditional values, land uses and pursuits such as trapping, hunting-gathering, hide-tanning and arts and crafts. These will be incorporated into a balanced economic

development plan. The plan will promote an inclusive system of governance, involving elders, youth and all settlement residents. Inclusivity, he emphasized, is the Métis way to self-reliance.

Governance

MSGC members are touring settlements to observe the present governance system and *"see if it works for us."* People are clear in their desire for elders to be included as advisors and mentors to help retain their culture and heritage.

They want to:

- promote a sense of identity;
- improve self-reliance;
- meet basic human needs by increasing equity and accountability and through the use of appropriate technology;
- respect the bush;
- provide stewardship;
- maximize resources, minimize waste;
- promote stewardship again.

The Métis expect to continue working closely with the municipal, provincial and federal governments. *"We feel they are responsible for the process, to help with leadership, ensure community involvement and facilitate the plan,"* said Wanuch.

B Expanding the Municipal Sphere of Influence
Mr. Ross Risvold, Mayor
Town of Hinton

Municipalities need to develop strategies to build influence with federal, provincial and territorial governments, Ross Risvold urged. In the face of changing regulations and environmental review processes, they must get involved to ensure they have a voice in regional development.

Environmental groups, Risvold argued, are articulate, extremely well educated, rich, influential organizations. Operating out of the major centres of influence across North America, they are experts in communications, government relations and lobbying. In Ottawa, 15 to 20 international environmental groups with direct lines of communication to MPs, ministers and senators, work to influence government policy.

Risvold encouraged municipalities *"to make part of your core business to have more strategic influence in Ottawa."* Economic planning must focus on a *balance* of social, economic and environmental factors, he said.

It is important to consider the concerns of residents of resource-dependent communities, who are vulnerable to environmental review decisions. The consequences of those decisions affect local economies and residents' livelihoods.

Risvold described American environmental policies and legislation he considers heavy-handed, suggesting such measures *"are moving here."* If municipalities want to maintain control over the future of their environments, they must get more involved, he said.

5. New Horizons for Northern Agriculture

A Alberta's International Marketing Strategy

Mr. Barry Mehr
Assistant Deputy Minister,
Investment and Trade Division
Alberta Economic Development

Agriculture and agrifood are *"at the top of the list"* of the provincial government's industry focus, Barry Mehr told conference delegates, adding that government is encouraging business immigration related to these sectors.

Mehr introduced his presentation by emphasizing the fundamental importance of:

- thinking globally, acting locally;
- getting onto the leading edge;
- value-chains.

Globalization has:

- increased access to foreign markets;
- created regional trading blocks;
- spread Western culture, including consumer tastes and choices.

Given globalization trends, international marketing is increasingly important to Alberta's long-term economic prosperity, Mehr emphasized. Advancement of technology has introduced faster, more efficient communications, and population growth has increased market demand and diversity.

The importance of value-added products and services

Over the past 50 years, trade in manufactured goods has significantly outstripped that of commodities. As the share of Alberta's manufacturing exports increases, we become less reliant on our commodity resources.

Thus, the value-added area represents the highest growth potential for Alberta.

Why add value?

Value-added exports:

- are increasing faster than commodity exports around the world;
- provide both upstream and downstream linkages in the Alberta economy;
- are less cyclical than commodities;
- encourage technology transfer to and from Alberta through foreign direct investment and exports.

Alberta's goal for value-added exports is to generate revenue of $26 billion by 2005, up from $7.8 billion today. Mehr believes we can reach or surpass this goal if infrastructure and transportation problems are addressed. Value-added export growth, he suggested, will also drive growth at the farm level.

"There are lots of opportunities that relate to the northern region. The world is growing and we have a comparative advantage to deliver the food we produce," said Mehr. In grain, for example, Alberta has a distribution advantage over competitors such as Australia and New Zealand, with a 25% freight advantage on cost to deliver containers into Japan, Korea and northern China.

Value chains

A value-chain includes everything required for production from the soil to the consumer's table. The cattle industry *"has a strong start in value chains,"* Mehr noted. Cargill, for example, shares 60% of its premium with the feedlot operator, who then passes on 60% of that return to the producer.

Mehr emphasized that increased returns due to value-added production must be equitably shared throughout the value chain. Value-added shipments increased by 246% between 1988 and 1998; however, this success must be passed along. Commodities have to be linked to value-added production, said Mehr, to ensure benefits all along the value chain.

Alberta's 1998 exports

($CAN billion)

- Oil and gas -15.3
- Manufactured goods -11.3 (**18% are food**)
- Agriculture - 2.6
- Other - 1.3

Mehr noted that although the value of oil and gas still beats out other sector contributions, some parts of the economy such as manufacturing, are expanding faster than the oil and gas sector.

Value-added agriculture has the necessary ingredients for growth:

- Agricultural resources
- Competitive utilities
- Lowest overall taxes in Canada
- Among the lowest manufacturing wages in Canada
- A young, productive highly motivated workforce

However, *"our prime advantage is our location,"* Mehr pointed out.

Specific opportunities for northern Alberta:

- Functional foods, neutraceuticals, natural pharmaceuticals
- Food packaging industry
- Forest products industry—potential to blend fibre from cereals with wood fibre.
- The cow/calf industry, as part of a value chain
- Hogs
- Poultry
- The Alaskan market

Guest Speaker

The Honourable Thelma Chalifoux
Senator

Senator Chalifoux, addressing delegates on the final day of the conference, spoke of the federal government's interest in and commitment to economic development in the north. Chalifoux specifically noted her concern regarding the federal government's exclusion of Alberta from this year's agricultural aid discussions and funds. *"We deserve to be considered at the federal level,"* she emphasized.

Current federal funding commitments benefiting the north include involvement in the Western Economic Diversification (WED) program. One such project is the Aboriginal Business Development Initiative, designed to improve business development opportunities for First Nations people. Chalifoux noted that while the program is advantageous for First Nations people, it does not address the interests of the Métis, whom she feels should be treated equally.

Chalifoux cited two long-term federally funded programs that benefit northern residents:

1. Two of a total of four Aboriginal capital corporations operate in the north. A community futures corporation network across Alberta also develops and provides services (such as small business loans and business management assistance) to help local small and medium-size businesses.
2. In 1998, the Canada-Alberta Western Economic Partnership Agreement (WEPA) designated $40 million over five years to encourage innovation, infrastructure and community development.

The federal government has also invested in the north to improve:

- northern telecommunications—funding a high speed digital wireless communication system that links schools in Peace River, Fort Vermilion and Northern Lakes regions;
- distance education—funding a consortium of post-secondary institutions to set up a community access network serving 23 remote north communities;
- mineral development—updating geological maps required for exploration of minerals;
- forest development—developing reliable tools to assess the impact of economic sectors on large scale biodiversity;
- bison research—providing bison producers with information about alternative feeding and foraging regimes.

While Chalifoux praised northerners as leaders and strong individuals, she also challenged them to work together to solve their concerns, for, as she said, *"Only in unity will we be able to address a lot of these issues."*

Small Group Session Summary

1. Northern Demographics

Northern Alberta's population:

- is young, male-dominant;
- includes a large transient population;
- is distributed over a vast area;
- includes a growing numbers of seniors.

In addition:

- the average age of skilled workers is mid-50s;
- young people are leaving;
- the population of seniors is growing;
- there's a significant transient labour force;
- some centres are experiencing rapid growth, which increases the cost of living;
- periods of rapid population growth and decline have strained infrastructures and eroded services;
- local markets are small.

Aboriginal communities:

- are currently experiencing high growth and unemployment rates;
- have residents with individual incomes below provincial averages.

2. Environment

Environment Issues

- Lack of vision or consensus by the province and northerners on an overall plan for development that protects the northern environment
- Lack of communication and consultation among stakeholders
- Lack of local community input into decisions affecting the region
- Lack of awareness of environmental issues, and of industry and government responses to them
- Polarized views on environmental issues
- Inadequate land use planning
- Current environmental policies may not reflect northern views
- Effects of development on air, water and soil
- Cumbersome governmental regulatory review and approval processes
- Inadequate wildlife management of endangered species and declining fish stocks; ineffective controls on commercial fisheries
- Lack of fish, wildlife and environmental enforcement and of deterrent penalties
- Importation of toxic waste
- Recreational impact on the environment
- Inefficiencies in energy production and use, such as capturing of waste heat, flare gas
- Insufficient reclamation initiatives to addresses such things as abandoned pipelines
- Limited recycling initiatives
- Deficient reforestation policies, programs and standards
- Lack of comfort with industry self-monitoring

Environment Solutions

A. ***Ensure sustainable development***

- Engage in stakeholder consultation and consensus-building:
  - Gather input from all stakeholders, such as representatives from tourism, trapping, education and recreation.
  - Increase the northern voice in decision-making.
  - Increase communication about the northern environment and governmental and industry stewardship.
- Conduct more comprehensive land-use planning:
  - Gather and disseminate reliable data.
  - Examine grazing leases and agricultural land-use policies.
  - Develop a coordinated land-use plan for northern Alberta that reflects regional priorities for development and conservation.
  - Manage the land base on behalf of all stakeholders.
- Provide greater clarity regarding lands available for development:
  - Develop consistent, clear regulations.
  - Harmonize federal, provincial and municipal policies.
- Respond to global warming:
  - Make decisions with the future in mind.
  - Consider the cumulative and long-term effects of development.
  - Develop a mechanism to ensure that northern views are heard.
  - Ensure policies are based on scientific knowledge.

B. ***Create clear, concise government policies***

- Take a harmonized approach:
  - Require cooperation and coordinated policy development from all jurisdictions.
  - Enhance consultation.
  - Examine options for land use, taking into consideration traditional and industrial land uses.
  - Resolve outstanding access issues between industry and communities.
- Develop clear resource-allocation guidelines
- Improve enforcement:
  - Streamline existing regulations.
  - Increase enforcement and initiate stiffer penalties for "commercial poaching."
  - Improve enforcement of pollution regulations.
  - Take steps to improve sustainability of hunting and fishing.

C. ***Balance environment, economy and quality of life***

- Improve communication and cooperation:
  - Improve cooperation among government departments, industry and communities.
- Improve education and awareness:
  - Ensure stakeholders have the necessary information about land use and are involved in decision making.
  - Educate the public on environmental issues.
  - Promote local decision making.
- Monitor and improve environmental initiatives:
  - Use technology to reduce pollution.
  - Clean up sites to enhance tourism and eco-tourism opportunities.
  - Protect blue skies and clean water.
  - Establish and regulate better clean air, water and soil standards.
- Identify and develop economic opportunities that address environmental issues:
  - Encourage industries to engage in carbon sequestration and to collect carbon credits (for example, practicing zero tillage as an agricultural method).
  - Develop energy-efficient technology and applications, and market them.

3. Economy

Economic Issues

- Restrictive taxation policies, such as the farm fuel tax and property tax on farm land
- Transportation:
  - Roads: the road system is inadequate and in disrepair
  - Air transport: it's costly and provides limited service
  - Rail: there's no competition, lack of direct access to CP and BC Rail, and insufficient access to rail cars
- Lack of unique northern strategies
- Lack of municipal funding for infrastructure programs
- Labour force: high demand for and lack of skilled labour force
- Economy not sufficiently diverse
- Not enough land-use planning
- Unclear, unwieldy regulatory and approval processes
- Environmental and resource stewardship issues affect industrial development
- Ability to compete in global market; northern communities struggle to access markets
- Lack of access to capital, research funds and seed capital
- Communities isolated, working alone
- Disparity in economic benefits among communities
- Higher cost of doing business in the north
- Lack of business programs to assist northerners
- Revenue reinvested in communities is disproportionate to the amount generated
- Land claims and Special Places designations deter investment
- Loss of small farms
- Aboriginal people want more opportunities to participate in the mainstream economy
- Financial institutions' lending policies don't consider the northern situation

Economic solutions

- Most important: emphasize local decision making
- Tailor solutions to the region or community, based on local needs.

A. ***Address infrastructure issues***

- Develop national and western transportation strategies for highways, rail and air; address lack of rail competition, access to rail cars; encourage a direct rail link to the Pacific.
- Proceed with new road construction: Build northern highway links from Fort Chipewyan to Fort McMurray, Fort Smith and Garden River; create new east-west connectors from Rainbow Lake to Fort Nelson, and from Fort McMurray to La Loche and Wabasca.
- Hasten road upgrades: Paving of Fort Vermilion to Red Earth; twinning of Highway #43.
- Coordinate road construction with future plans of industry to build roads.
- Request provincial participation in funding municipal water and sewer systems.
- Enhance fibre-optic, cable and satellite telecommunications systems.

B. *Boost manufacturing, value-added opportunities*

- Develop local training and education.
- Develop secondary processing opportunities:
  - Look for opportunities to finish and process products (such as pasta and beef) in the north.
  - Encourage strategies to promote investment opportunities in the north.
  - Promote entrepreneurship, business incubation and mentoring.
- Reduce government barriers:
  - Increase government support for value-added ventures.
  - Tailor government programs to northern needs. Provide more input into the development of

both federal and provincial programs that affect the north.

- Provide small local companies with greater access to federal government contracts.
- Increase the northern tax allowance.

- Develop economic strategies:
  - Focus on long-term research-based strategic planning.
  - Lobby for better recovery of regional royalty dollars.
  - Initiate new northern-based programs and seed capital.
- Develop tourism initiatives.
- Encourage e-commerce.

C. ***Increase opportunities for venture capital and research funds***

- Identify sources of risk capital. Facilitate venture capital investment from non-traditional sources, for example, from pension funds and venture capital pools.
- Government lenders (for example, the Alberta Opportunity Company) must take into consideration northern needs.
- Improve access to loans for Métis settlements, First Nations peoples, remote and small communities.
- Provide tax incentives to facilitate investment:
  - Allow creative tax incentives.
  - Reduce property and fuel taxes for the agricultural sector.
- Change lending policies:
  - Pressure all levels of government to influence financial institutions to modify lending policies for northern ventures

4. Human Resources and Services

Human Resources and Services Issues

- Services not sufficiently tailored to the region
- Communities trying to tackle issues alone, without industry or other jurisdictional partners
- Municipalities lack funding to provide essential services
- High dropout rates from school
- High average age of entry to apprenticeship programs
- High demand and shortage of skilled workers
- Underutilized training institutions
- Insufficient oil, gas and forestry training programs in the north
- Outdated, non-standardized apprenticeship classifications, regulations and licenses
- High cost of post-secondary education compared to southern Alberta
- Lack of assistance for northern students moving to larger northern centres
- Industry's human resources policies don't reflect the northern situation
- Young workers migrating south
- High cost of delivering service
- Insufficient industry commitment to training
- Lack of incentives to attract and retain qualified people
- Lack of housing, services and recreational facilities in remote and high-growth communities hinder recruitment
- High cost of recruiting and retaining workers
- Insufficient northern living tax allowance
- Law enforcement costs
- Lack of community support systems (family management, alcohol abuse, housing, day care, etc.) to deal with poverty, family violence and addictions
- Landfill regulations costly for municipalities

Human Resource and Services Solutions

A. ***Address shortage of educated and skilled people***

- Create job-ready students:
  - Industry should be involved in improving training programs.
  - Governments and school boards must address the situation of school dropouts.
- Develop responsive educational programming/ curricula:
  - Enhance early intervention programs to address problems with illiteracy and impaired life-skills.
  - Encourage the consortium approach to education and training delivery. Colleges, industry and aboriginal communities identify trades and determine education and training requirements.
  - Emphasize basic life skills.
  - Develop training requirements to reflect job requirements.
- Secure community and industry commitment to train local people:
  - Offer tax incentives.
  - Enhance bursary programs.
  - Develop clearinghouses for sharing information between industry and Aboriginal groups.
- Enter into partnerships:
  - Create partnerships between industry and Aboriginal groups.
- Increase local training and apprenticeships:
  - Create incentives to train and hire locally.
- Provide early exposure to trades:
  - Offer apprenticeship and non-academic programs earlier in school.
  - Integrate Career and Technology Studies and apprenticeship programs.
- Develop recruitment strategies:
  - Encourage provincial and municipal governments to provide incentives to finish school.
  - Lower tuition.
  - Industry must provide incentives such as signing bonuses.
- Ensure flexible delivery of education:
  - Create training centres that reflect the present-day and next generation job-markets.
  - Increase local access to university programs.
  - Lobby industry and government for more local training programs.
  - Offer training via telecommunications.
  - Take advantage of cyber opportunities: provide distance education through accredited and respected institutions.
  - Offer more routes to finishing high school, including work experience and equivalencies.
  - Promote co-op programs.
  - Industry should encourage secondments.

B. ***Provide affordable housing***

- Increase funding for social housing:
  - Give municipalities access to education tax.
  - Reinstate programs such as the remote housing, rural emergency home, Métis housing, rural and native housing programs.
  - Encourage municipalities to develop land.
  - Develop community-industry partnerships.
  - Introduce large-scale purchasing of land for housing developments.
  - Modify mortgage requirements.
  - Address the needs of seniors.
- Undertake long-term planning to address the aging population's and seniors' needs:
  - Increase funding to allow seniors to live at home.
- Attract new investment:
  - Involve the private sector.
  - Attract outside developers of affordable, multiple-family housing.

C. ***Improve access to health-care services***

- Return more services to small-town hospitals.
- Regionalize services.
- Increase home-care funding.
- Coordinate regional efforts to attract doctors and other professionals.
- Increase access to tele-health systems.
- Address medical needs of isolated regions.

D. ***Increase access to social services***

- Address social issues, such as day care, family violence and poverty.
- Increase programming for treatment and prevention of addictions.

E. ***Develop unique northern strategies to address human resource issues***

- Market the uniqueness of northern employment opportunities.
- Develop recruitment packages.
- Increase cooperative community recruitment efforts.
- Develop a human resource strategy for the north—a long-term plan that involves government, business, education and other stakeholders.

F. ***Address issues regarding high cost of policing services***

- Provide provincial incentives for communities that share regional funding.
- Improve crime prevention programming.

G. ***Build better communities***

- Ensure community planners have good demographic information.
- Identify steps to reduce migration from small communities.
- Consider regional jurisdiction integration, cooperation or amalgamation.
- Improve municipal planning to make communities attractive for business investment and recruitment.

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Message from the Executive Director

Challenge North: Planning for Progress brought together a diverse group of people from across northern Alberta. This forum gave delegates an opportunity to discuss many issues critical to the future of northern Alberta.

Comments from delegates highlighted opportunities for the advancement of northern Alberta including:

- the continued development of natural resources;
- forestry-related value-added production;
- diversifying the agricultural sector;
- tourism development.

Input from delegates will also help the NADC set goals and priorities and identify key projects to be addressed in the NADC Business Plan.

While there are opportunities to advance northern Alberta's economy, we still face many challenges that include:

- infrastructure development and maintenance;
- access to skill development and post-secondary education opportunities;
- ensuring the long-term viability of northern air transportation systems.

I would like to thank the former NADC Chair, the Honourable Mike Cardinal, NADC members and staff and finally, northern Albertans for their support of ***Challenge North: Planning for Progress***. Their efforts and input greatly contributed to the success of the conference. We look forward to harnessing new ideas for change at the next ***Challenge North*** conference in Fort McMurray, Alberta in April, 2003.

Tom Baldwin

Challenge North: Planning For Progress Conference Sponsors

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Wilf Schoorlemmer	MD of Spirit River #133	Spirit River, AB
Ron Scrimshaw	Fairview College	Fairview, AB
Morris Seiferling	Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development	Fairview, AB
Fiona Seniantha	Dene Tha' First Nation	Chateh, AB
Norma Shaw	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo	Fort McMurray, AB
Ken Shewchuk	Alberta Human Resources and Employment	Lac La Biche, AB
Sharon Siga	Peace Library System	Grande Prairie, AB
John Simpson	Mistahia Regional Health Authority	Grande Prairie, AB
Elaine Sky	Peace River School Division #10	Peace River, AB
Margaret Slate	Metis Opportunities Inc.	Edmonton, AB
Kathy Slater		
Ken Smith	Alberta Resource Development	Edmonton, AB
Edie Spagrud	Lesser Slave Lake Community Development Corp.	Slave Lake, AB
Warren Stewart	Town of Valleyview	Valleyview, AB
Tim Stone	M.D. of Saddle Hills No. 20	Spirit River, AB
Willard Strebchuk	Town of Whitecourt	Whitecourt, AB
Murray Summers	Blue Ridge Lumber (1981) Ltd.	Whitecourt, AB
Cliff Supernault	Alberta Resource Development	Edmonton, AB
Alan H. Taylor	Family & Community Support Services	Athabasca, AB
Brian Testo	Grizzly Gold	Peers, AB
Marilyn Thomas	Agriculture and Food Council	Leduc, AB
Tom Thompson		
Floyd Thompson	Northern Alberta Development Council	Kikino, AB
Brian Thoreson	Town of Sexsmith	Sexsmith, AB
Evelyn Thunder		
Al Toews	Northern Alberta Development Council	Fort Vermilion, AB
Cameron Tofer	BIOWARE Corp.	Edmonton, AB
Gerald Tostowaryk	Gift Lake Metis Settlement	Gift Lake, AB
John Trefanenko	Town of St. Paul	St. Paul, AB

Mark Ladd	Dr. Mary Jackson School	Keg River, AB
Drew Lamont	Alberta Human Resources & Employment	Grande Prairie, AB
Alan Lamouche	Gift Lake Metis Settlement	Gift Lake, AB
Hector Lamouche	Gift Lake Metis Settlement	Gift Lake, AB
Sibylla Lane	Fairview College	Peace River, AB
Stephen Lane	Slave Lake & District Chamber of Commerce	Slave Lake, AB
Paul Langevin	MLA Lac La Biche-St. Paul	Edmonton, AB
Evens Lavoie	Northern Forage Inc.	Nampa, AB
Gary Leithead	Alberta Forest Products Association	Edmonton, AB
Muriel L'Hirondelle	East Prairie Metis Settlement	High Prairie, AB
Dalton Longson	County of Grande Prairie No. 1	Grande Prairie, AB
Wayne Lougheed	Human Resources and Employment	Lac La Biche, AB
James Loyie	Tallcree School Division	Fort Vermilion, AB
Debra Lozinski	Lakeland County	Lac La Biche, AB
Eugene Ludwick	Prince Rupert Port Authority	Prince Rupert, BC
Doug MacRae	Keyano College	Fort McMurray, AB
Brian Marcotte	Alberta Infrastructure	Edmonton, AB
Doug Mark	Grande Prairie Airport	Grande Prairie, AB
Dave Martens	La Crete Chamber of Commerce	La Crete, AB
Arnold Mattson	PFRA	Edmonton, AB
Marlene Maxwell	M.D. of Clear Hills No. 21	Worsley, AB
Scott McAlpine	Grande Prairie Regional College	Grande Prairie, AB
Dave McArthur	Alberta Commercial Fishermen's Association	Lac La Biche, AB
Bernie McCallion	Mistahia Health Region Board	Grande Prairie, AB
Jim McCammon	Alberta Newsprint Company	Whitecourt, AB
Elaine McCoy	Macleod Institute	Calgary, AB
Ken McCready	Agriculture Canada	Edmonton, AB
Bruce McDonald	Alberta Learning	Edmonton, AB
Everett McDonald	County of Grande Prairie No. 1	Grande Prairie, AB
Don McGladdery	Lac La Biche Regional Community Dev. Corp.	Lac La Biche, AB
Bonnie McInnis	Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo	Fort McMurray, AB
Gerald McIvor	Northern Alberta Development Council	Whitecourt, AB
Floyd McLennan	Town of Grande Cache	Grande Cache, AB
Barry Mehr	Alberta Economic Development	Edmonton, AB
Denis Menard	Portage College	Lac La Biche, AB
Frank Meneen	Tallcree Band #446	Fort Vermilion, AB
Peter Merlo	Grande Prairie Chamber of Commerce	Grande Prairie, AB

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